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ON TAP

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AFTER THE RAIN IN MAY

The recent rain on Thursday, May 22, 2008, was certainly an “eye opener” for us locals. At the District’s Robinson Ranch Treatment Facility located in the undeveloped north end of Dove Canyon, rainfall and temperature is measured and recorded every day of the year. On this particular day, at 12:00 noon, the rain gauge measured 0 inches of rainfall. By 4:00 p.m., four hours later, the rain gauge measured ½” of rain. Astoundingly, by 8:00 p.m. it measured 2 and ½ inches of rain. In an eight hour period, 2 and ½ inches of rain had fallen in the Trabuco Canyon area.

While rainfall in the month of May is not unheard of, this amount of rain is remarkable. Even more interesting was the fact that much of the rest of the county did not experience any rainfall on this same day. This would suggest the Trabuco Canyon area is a micro-climate in itself. Certainly local residents, who have lived in the Trabuco Canyon area for any length of time and who also work in other areas of the county, have learned not to judge what the weather is like for the rest of the county based on the local weather conditions, particularly if the local weather is foggy or cloudy.

So what happened as a result of this enormous amount of rain in such a short period of time? It was a “Perfect Storm” for mudslides in the rural canyon areas of the District. The recent fires damaged or destroyed much of the well rooted native vegetation. The newly seeded vegetation still

did not have deep roots. As a result, the torrent of rain and water developed into walls of mud.

The damage extended from Cook’s Corner to O’Neill County Park and areas beyond. Live Oak Canyon Road became quickly impassable. Fortunately, County emergency services activated quickly. The Canyon was barricaded for travel by both the Orange County Fire Authority and the Orange County Sheriff Department. Emergency Mandatory Evacuation Orders were issued to residents in the affected areas. The County quickly mobilized crews to clear mud and debris.

When it was safe to enter the mudslide area of the canyon, District water crews surveyed the water system for any possible damage to the water delivery system. District crews also inspected resident’s water meters. Many of the meters were “spinning” which meant that water was going through the meter and damage had occurred to the customer’s water service line on the customer’s side of the meter. If this was encountered by District personnel, the meters were “turned off” and the customer was notified in person or by phone that the water supply line was damaged and needed repair. This repair was the customer’s responsibility. In some instances District personnel could assist with the repair by locating the damaged area and advising what could be done. District insurance restricts District personnel from

performing water supply line repairs on the customer's side of the meter.

The good news was the damage was limited and no one was injured during this unusual event. Emergency services acted quickly and the community, as a whole, worked together to get things "back to normal."

SPEAKING OF WEATHER

As we enter in to the warm months of the year, now is a very good time to "tune up" your residential irrigation system if you have one.

Start by inspecting your irrigation sprayers. Are they adjusted correctly? Are they the proper spray for the area that is intended to be watered? Is there an opportunity to switch to drip irrigation or soaker irrigation? These types of sprayers are much more water efficient.

Also check your sprinkler timer. This is a good weekend project and shouldn't take a long time to do. Are the run times for each zone appropriate for the foliage in that zone? If water is running onto the sidewalk or into the street, water is literally going down the drain and you are paying for it. The default factory setting for most residential timers is 10 minutes per station starting at 5:00 a.m. It is easy to forget about your timer and the run times of each station at that early hour of the morning.

If you have an 8 station timer and don't adjust the factory settings for your property, this means you could be using more than 400 gallons of water each day for irrigation.

There are 748 gallons in a billing unit of water. The District implemented its Conservation Encouragement Rate Program several years ago. This is a tiered rate structure that affects an increase for the cost of water by blocks of billing units. Using 400 gallons of water for irrigation each day could dramatically increase a residential water bill.

The Regular Board Meeting is held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the District office located at 32003 Dove Canyon Drive, Trabuco Canyon. The public is encouraged to attend.

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

- ◇ May 20, 2008 – Received information relating to financial assumptions and water/sewer and reclaimed and recycled water rates.
- ◇ Received status updates relating to the Rose Canyon and Lang Wells Upgrades to Treatment Facilities Project, the Rose Canyon Reservoir Rehabilitation Project, and the Baker Regional Water Treatment Facility.
- ◇ Conducted a Closed Session.

ON TAP is published and distributed by TCWD. We welcome your comments, suggestions and questions. Please call or write Sharon E. Smith, Editor

TCWD's *ON-TAP*

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